

## Jean Michel Jarre – Essentials and Rarities (2011)

Written by bluelover

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CD1: 01 – *Souvenir of China* 02 – *Oxygene 2* 03 – *Arpegiateur* 04 – *Oxygene 4* 05 – *Equinoxe 4* 06 – *Calypso 2* [play](#) 07 – *Zoolook* 08 – *Magnetic fields 1* 09 – *Magnetic fields 2* 10 – *Equinoxe 5* 11 – *Industrial revolution 2* 12 – *Rendez-vous 4* 13 – *Gloria, lonely boy* 14 – *Oxygene 6* 15 – *Space of freedom*

CD2:

01 – *Happiness is a sad song* 02 – *Hypnose* 03 – *Erosmachine*

[play](#)

04 – *La cage* 05 – *Chanson des granges brulees* 06 – *Windswept canyon* 07 – *The abominable snowman* 08 – *Desserted palace* 09 – *Le pays de rose* 10 – *Rain forest rap session* 11 – *Black Bird* 12 – *Music box concerto* 13 – *Iraqi hitch-hiker* 14 – *Les granges brulees* 15 – *La cage vitalic RMX* 16 – *Erosmachine vitalic RMX*

Essentials is a thoughtfully chosen selection of tracks from the Dreyfus period, covering the giant albums *Oxygene*, *Equinoxe*, *Chants Magnétiques* and more, digitally remastered in a care-applied way, by going back to the original analogue master tapes, and applying up-to date remastering technology. This system has bypassed the remastering mania of the 90 s, where often chunks of sound would be missed in a pixellated digital soup. The result is every bit as good as the original sound, carrying depth and range and conveying the excitement of Jarre s cutting-edge music as it was conceived. Rarities is a real find for any Jarre completist or fan. It covers mainly material recorded prior to the emergence of *Oxygene*, some never commercially released, and none ever seen on CD before. At the time, Jarre was a student under Pierre Schaeffer, the creator of *Musique Concrète*, and the man behind the idea of music moving away from traditional instrumentation, towards a sound-based appreciation whatever the source. Experimentation with sounds abounds on these recordings, which are again given the same meticulous remastering treatment. ---Editorial Reviews

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To my knowledge at least, this is the fourth album released to claim the name "The Essential" Jean Michel Jarre, leaving aside albums like *Aero* or *Musik aus Zeit und Raum*. In all fairness, none of them have contained exactly the same contents, though has always been a common core of work interspersed with a few, newer morsels. Here we find a welcome bow for *The Concerts in China's* under-appreciated *Arpeggiator*. However, while 2000's *Gloria*, *Lonely Boy* makes an appearance, there is nothing from either *Chronologie* or 1997's *Oxygene 7-13*. Perhaps this is because of the emphasis Jarre placed on so-called dancier fare like *Chronologie* when putting together *Aero* several years ago. Even so, the non appearance of *Chronologie 4* or *6* or *Oxygene 8*, *12* or *13* can only be described as puzzling on something that claims to be essential. *Zoolook* also appears, and in its original album form, not the later remix.

However, what is there sounds generally beautiful (as one might expect), and the 24bit mastering is an improvement on the remastering of his work that happened during his move to Sony in the 1990's. It really manages to show off the scope and breadth of material like the *Equinoxe* and *Magnetic Fields* tracks that appear here. Even *Fourth Rendez-Vous* sounds a touch better, though you'd have to listen with decent equipment to get the real benefit, I think.

What is more interesting, however, is the second (Rarities) disc. Here, some of Jarre's earliest works, for so long available only on bootleg releases, finally see an official airing and a clean up. Most of the disc is comprised of selections from the 1972 album *Deserted Palace*. And they do sound better than having them on bootleg recording. Pieces like *Music Box Concerto* and *Deserted Palace* itself sound a little more vivid and clear, with strong, crisp bass and nicely defined treble. However, the beginning of *Deserted Palace* seems to have gone through a blender, suddenly having the treble turned up around 10 seconds in. Perhaps this is the best that could be done with the (now fairly aged) analogue master tapes. The selection does cherry pick the best from the album, together with *Erosmachine* and *La Cage*, whose influence can be heard even into the 90's on *Chronologie*.

However, for a fan, this represents something of a missed opportunity. There are a number of old pieces, like *Zig Zag Dance* and *Cartolina*, that would have been nice to include. The biggest disappointment for me is the lack of any video material, or the cream of some of the 1980's remixes of *Zoolook*, *Zoolookologie* (to this day one of my favourite Jarre things ever) or the *Special* remix of *Fourth Rendez-vous*.

For me, then, this collection is a mixed bag: a feast of treats that do appear, adulterated somewhat by the disappointment for the absence of those that do not. Still, for a fan, this is

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certainly worth having, if only to hear some of those things with a fresh ear. --- ds (Whitby, UK),  
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